

HOW TO... Customise the look of Windows Vista

Windows Vista provides a wealth of options for personalising the look of your desktop. Will Head explains some tips and tricks to get your computer looking just the way you want it

You may use your computer primarily for work, but that doesn't mean you can't personalise it a little so that it looks are more to your taste.

There are numerous ways of customising Windows Vista to get it looking exactly the way you want it. Here we've used Vista Home Premium, with an additional step for Vista Ultimate users.

1 Vista comes with a number of wallpaper images as standard. To access these, open the Control Panel and click on Appearance and Personalization, followed by Personalization and Desktop Background. Click on an image in the list to use it. To use an image from your Pictures folder, just select Pictures from the Picture Location drop-down menu. For images from another folder, click the Browse button and navigate to the appropriate folder.

2 If you have a particularly high-resolution display, you may find that the default font size is a little too small to read easily. To fix this, navigate to the Personalization section of the Control Panel and click on the Adjust font size (DPI) link from the Tasks menu in the top left-hand corner. Select the Large scale (120 DPI) option, then click OK and restart your PC.

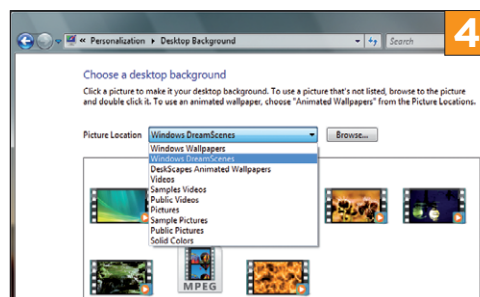
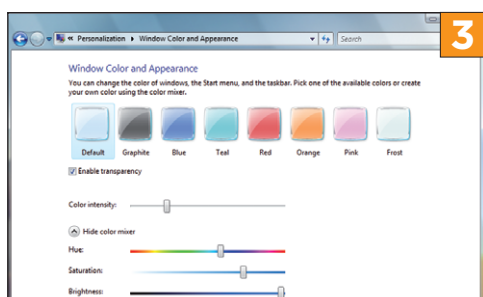
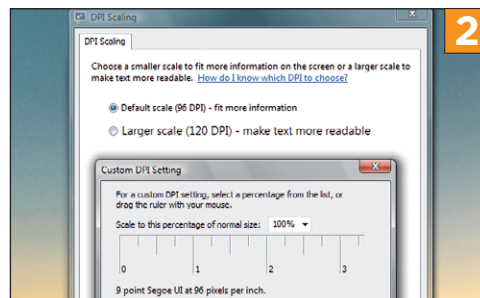
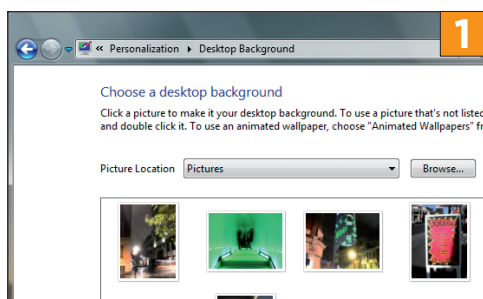
To fine-tune the font size, open the DPI Scaling dialog box again and click on the Custom DPI button. Click on the ruler and drag the scale to the right or the

left to increase or decrease the font size. A preview appears under the scale.

3 Vista's transparent Aero interface is a big step up from Windows XP's desktop. To tweak the way Aero looks, go back to Appearance and Personalization in the Control Panel, and click Personalization. Choose Window Color and Appearance. You should see a window called Window Color and Appearance, which contains a number of coloured squares.

If instead of this you see an Appearance Settings box that looks similar to XP, Aero isn't enabled. To turn it on, select Windows Aero from the Color scheme list and click OK. To change the default window colour, choose a coloured box from the selection available. Alternatively, click on the Show color mixer link and use the sliders to create the look you want. Adjust how strong the effect is with the 'Color intensity' slider.

4 With Windows Vista Ultimate Edition you can use animated images on your desktop. First, install the Windows Dreamscene Ultimate Extra. Open the Control Panel, go to System and Maintenance and then Windows Update. Select Dreamscene in the list of Ultimate Extras, and click install. Now when you select Desktop Background from the Personalization section of the Control Panel, choose Windows Dreamscenes from the Picture Location menu and select a video.



HOW TO... Use the Vista Sidebar

The Vista Sidebar is an area of the screen reserved for gadgets – small applications that provide quick access to information. By default the Sidebar is on the right-hand side of the screen. Initially you'll see four gadgets: a clock, an RSS reader, a picture viewer and a calendar.

1 You can customise the gadgets so they display information that's relevant to you. For example, you could change the feed reader so that it displays headlines from websites you frequently visit. To do this, open Internet Explorer and navigate to a site you regularly visit that offers an RSS feed, such as www.computershopper.co.uk/news. Click on the orange Get RSS link, then on Subscribe to this feed. To change which headlines appear, right-click on the Feed Headlines gadget in the Sidebar, then click Options. To select a specific feed, choose it from the drop-down menu under Display this feed, then click OK.

2 You're not limited to the four default gadgets in your Sidebar, either – there are many more available. The first place to look is the gallery of gadgets included with Windows Vista. Right-click on the Sidebar and select Add Gadgets. Here you'll find an array of gadgets, from a currency converter and stock ticker to a weather forecaster and CPU meter. To add a gadget, simply drag it from the gallery and drop it where you want it on your Sidebar. Hundreds more gadgets are free to download from Microsoft's website. Click on the Get more gadgets online link. Then browse through the online gallery until you find one that takes your fancy.

